

From Bishop Suffragan Diane M. Jardine Bruce 7/6/20

'Pray, and do something' resources offer help to respond systemic racism

By Bishop Suffragan Diane M. Jardine Bruce

God,

Grant me justice, so that I may treat others as they deserve.

Grant me mercy, so that I don't treat others as they deserve.

Grant me a humble walk with you, so that I may understand the difference.

— The Rev. Dr. Patricia McCaughan and the Very Rev. Keith Yamamoto

This prayer, written by two priests of this diocese, can be found on page 166 of the book *Race and Prayer: Collected Voices Many Dreams*, Malcolm Boyd and Chester Talton, editors.

I used this book a number of times when I was a parish priest, but hadn't looked at it in the last few years. The violence and murder perpetrated at the hands of law enforcement and vigilantes on our black community, especially the "caught on tape" murder of George Floyd, moved me to pull this book off my shelf, dust it off, and pray.

Maybe you are in that same place as well. I need to pray, but I also know I need to DO something. The first thing I want to do is to apologize to you, my siblings in Christ right here in the Diocese of Los Angeles who have been living under and with the systems of injustice and white supremacy for centuries, and who feel the weight of that oppression every day of your lives.

On June 7 the national Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE) hosted *Talk2Talk: Congregational and UBE Activism in the Face of Social Unrest*. The panelists (bios at the end of this note) were the Rev. Dr. Gayle Fisher-Stewart, the Very Rev. Canon Martini Shaw and the Rev. Melanie Mullens. They said what I needed to hear: we cannot let this minute in our history fade away like dust in the wind. We are being called to voice our disdain for the actions taken against God's people – especially those who have been marginalized and discriminated against for centuries. The YouTube video of the event can be found on line.

On June 21 UBE hosted a follow-up to the June 7 event: *Talk2Talk: Moving from Protest to Marathon Systemic Response*. The same panelists offered their wisdom as to how we can -- no, we **MUST** -- move past protest to effecting the kind of radical changes to dismantle systems of injustice and inequality that have existed in this country for centuries.

If we have had any part in building or sustaining any system that has oppressed another, we need to acknowledge that sin, and repent. We need to work to transform systems of oppression into systems of love and care – ensuring equal access to all at every level and area of our society.

If you, like me, have felt hopeless in wondering “what can I do,” when the video of this event becomes available that will be a great place to start. We will post a link to it on our diocesan website when it is available.

Building on the work of the UBE’s Talk2Talks, Canon Suzanne Edwards-Acton and I are excited to announce that the Rev. Dr. Gayle Fisher-Stewart has agreed to be our preacher at our annual celebration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday in 2021. Working with a team from the diocese, we hope to put together an interactive program for that event. Given the uncertainty of the pandemic, we will be planning for both a digital and an in-person event.

In terms of resources locally and throughout the Episcopal Church to use sooner than the MLK weekend, the diocesan website has a section with resources for you and your congregation to begin this work. More will be added over time.

My siblings in Christ: Please pray. Please study. Please teach. Please act. We cannot let this “blow over” and not address the underlying causes – including white supremacy – that keep us repeating the same acts of injustice on our siblings in Christ.

WWJD? We all know the answer to that.

God of all peoples of the earth: we pray for an end to racism in all forms, and for an end to the denial that perpetuates white privilege, and for your support for all of those who bear the struggle of internalized racism, and for wisdom to recognize and eradicate the institutional racism in the church, and for the strength to stand against the bigotry and suffering that inhabits the world; for these and all your blessings we pray, O God, Christ Jesus, Holy Spirit. Amen.

— Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook, *Race and Prayer: Collected Voices Many Dreams*, pg. 50

Guest Panelists for Talk2Talk:

The Rev. Dr. Gayle Fisher-Stewart is interim rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Washington, DC, and is the president of the Crummell-Cooper DC Chapter, UBE. She comes to ordained ministry after retiring from the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington with the rank of captain. She is the author of the forthcoming book (July 17, 2020), *Preaching Black Lives (Matter)* (Church Publishing).

The Very Rev. Canon Martini Shaw is rector of The Historic African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he has led this community in boldly proclaiming the reconciling Gospel of Jesus Christ for 17 years. UBE's former national second vice president, Father Shaw also serves on the advisory board for the Episcopal Church Office of Black Ministries and is chair of the Episcopal Church's Executive Council Committee for HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities).

The Rev. Melanie Mullens, director of Reconciliation, Justice and Creation Care for The Episcopal Church, is charged with bringing the Jesus Movement to the concerns of the world. Prior to joining the presiding bishop's staff, she was the downtown missionary at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, leading a historic southern congregation's missional, civic and reconciliation ministries.

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